



MORE THAN 21 LAKH PEOPLE DIED IN INDIA DUE TO AIR POLLUTION IN 2021

Globally 81 lakh deaths were due to breathing in polluted air, up from 66 lakh in 2019, says the report by US-based Health Effects Institute

A LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG CHILDREN

For children, exposure to air pollution was the second-leading risk factor for death globally in 2021, after malnutrition. As per the report, about 7.09 lakh children worldwide, including 1.69 lakh in India, died as a result of breathing polluted air. About 72% of these deaths were linked to exposure to household air pollution from burning solid fuels for cooking

INDIA, CHINA ACCOUNT FOR 54% OF FATALITIES

Air pollution was the second-largest risk factor of deaths among adults, after high blood pressure. In 2019, it was the fourth
■ India and China (23 lakh deaths) were the two leading countries for air pollution deaths followed by Pakistan (2,56,000 deaths)
■ The report blamed PM_{2.5} particles for 90% of air pollution deaths | P5

99%

OF PEOPLE EXPOSED TO UNHEALTHY LEVELS OF PM_{2.5} PARTICLES, SAYS REPORT

80 Indian Haj pilgrims die of extreme heat

Over 900 dead as day-time temperature in Mecca goes past 50°C; 600 are from Egypt

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

AT least 922 people, including 80 Indians, have died of scorching heat during the five-day Haj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. A number of Indians are reportedly missing. "Nine of the dead are from Jammu and Kashmir. The deaths are due to extreme heat and also due to old age. Two Indians died in road accidents," said a source.

According to AFP, 600 of the 922 who died are Egyptians. Fatalities have been confirmed by Jordan, Indonesia, Iran, Senegal, Tunisia, and Kurdistan.

Last year more than 200 pilgrims were reported dead, most of them from Indonesia. This year's tragedy could be the third deadliest incident at Haj after the 2015 stampede in Mina that killed 2,400 pilgrims and the 1990 stampede that killed 1,428 people.

The Saudi government has not provided any official information on fatalities so far, though it flagged 2,700 cases of 'heat exhaustion' on Sunday.

Sources said the toll could go up as scores of pilgrims are reported missing by their relatives, who scoured hospitals and took to social media. Facebook and other social media networks were flooded with

pictures of the missing and requests for leads.

About 1.8 million people from all over the world, many old and infirm, took part in the days-long, mostly outdoor pilgrimage, held this year during the oven-like Saudi summer. Temperatures are hovering over 50 degrees Celsius in Mecca, Islam's holiest city. According to reports, several people fainted while trying to perform the symbolic stoning of the devil amid blazing heat.

According to a Saudi study published last month, temperatures in the area are rising 0.4 degrees Celsius each decade.

Saudi Arabia has already spent billions of dollars on crowd control and safety measures, but the sheer number of participants makes ensuring their safety difficult.

Nearly 1.75 lakh Indians went for Haj this year. Officials claimed India extended all possible support to make the pilgrims' stay comfortable and even facilitated their transfer to Mecca from Riyadh on a high-speed train.

Haj is the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. It is considered a must for every Muslim who can afford the trip and is physically able to make it.

Ahead of key state polls, MSP for 14 crops hiked



MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICES FOR ALL Kharif CROPS FOR MARKETING SEASON 2024-25

Values in Rupees per quintal

CROPS	MSP 2024-25	Cost* KMS 2024-25	Margin over cost (%)	MSP 2023-24	Increase/Decrease
Paddy					
Common	2,300	1,533	50	2,183	117
Grade A	2,320	-	-	2,203	117
Jowar					
Hybrid	3,371	2,247	50	3,180	191
Maldandi	3,421	-	-	3,225	196
Tur/Arhar	7,550	4,761	59	7,000	550
Moong	8,682	5,788	50	8,558	124
Maize	2,225	1,447	54	2,090	124
Cotton (Medium)	7,121	4,747	50	6,620	501

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

AHEAD of elections in key states like Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir later this year, the Centre on Wednesday raised the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for 14 Kharif crops for the 2024-25 marketing season. The MSP for 'common' grade paddy has been raised ₹117 to ₹2,300 per quintal, while for the 'A' grade variety it has been hiked to ₹2,320 per quintal for the upcoming Kharif season, Union information and broad-

casting minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters.

The MSP hike is in line with the 2018-19 announcement of fixing it at a level of at least 1.5 times of the all-India weighted average cost of production, the government said.

"By increasing MSP, the government aims to provide a safety net for farmers, enabling them to cover their cost of production and secure a fair return on investment," a senior leader of the NDA said. However, critics said while the MSP hike provides immediate relief to farmers, it must be complemented with broader reforms.

The decision comes amid continuing protests by farmers over various demands including guaranteed MSP and the criticism from some quarters that the BJP government's alleged failure to address farmers' demands contributed to its lacklustre performance in the Lok Sabha elections.

In the three poll-bound states, farmers make up a large chunk of the population, especially in rural areas, and can play a key role in shaping the outcome. The MSP hike comes despite the Food Corporation of India holding a record stockpile of 53.4 million tonnes of rice.

Govt open to fresh NEET-UG for all if the SC issues orders

KETAN NAROTTAM TANNA @ New Delhi

THE Union Education Ministry is not averse to conducting a fresh round of the National Eligibility-Cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG), subject to directives from the Supreme Court's scheduled hearing on July 8. An official source told this paper that the ministry is ready to organise a retest for all 24 lakh NEET-UG aspirants if the court gives the go-ahead.

Sources said one potential approach is to not limit the retest to the 1,563 candidates who were given grace marks and open it to all the students who want to go for re-examination.

The National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducted the medical exams, informed the Supreme Court that retest for the over 1,500 students will be conducted on June 23 and the results will be announced by June 30. The court has not stalled the counselling process, which will begin from July 6.

Asked whether this would entail a comprehensive retest rather than a selective approach, sources acknowledged the possibility of a complete new exam if directed by the court. They also highlighted Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan's "profound concern" regarding the NEET-UG controversy, underscoring his commitment to addressing it as a "top priority".

This year's exam posed a unique challenge: a record number of candidates got the perfect score on 720 out of 720, significantly altering the ranking dynamics and intensifying competition for medical college admission.

Meanwhile, the education ministry on Wednesday proactively cancelled the UGC-NET exam following inputs that its integrity may have been compromised. The matter has been handed over to the CBI for probe.



HIMALAYAN VISIT
Former speaker of US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi greets Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala on Wednesday. China has, unsurprisingly, condemned the visit by the US Congressional delegation | P1 | P9

DKS keen on contesting Channapatna bypoll?

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @ Bengaluru

DEPUTY Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's keenness to contest the byelection to the Assembly from Channapatna constituency shows that he has grand plans to re-establish his hold on the region with his brother DK Suresh losing the Bengaluru Rural seat in the recent Lok Sabha elections.

Shivakumar, who is also KPCC president, on Wednesday

did not rule out fielding Suresh even as the latter recently said that there will be surprise candidates for bypolls in the state. Which means, it would be either Shivakumar or Suresh contesting from Channapatna.

Before leaving for Channapatna, he told reporters in Bengaluru that he may be left with no choice but to contest the bypoll from Channapatna if the party high command and people want. **CONTINUED ON P4**

Warmest Delhi night in 55 years

35.2°C

Delhi recorded its warmest night in 55 years on Wednesday, indicating severe heatwave conditions even at night. It was 8°C above normal.

● It was the highest daily minimum temperature in Delhi since 1969. The earlier record was 34.9°C on May 23, 1972.

● On Tuesday, the minimum temperature recorded in Alwar was 37°C, the highest in the country since 1969.

Tomato touches ₹100/kg as wilt disease hits crop

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Mysuru

TOMATO prices might have touched Rs 100 a kg. But this is no good news for farmers as their crop has been hit by wilt disease.

The farmers now fear that they may not even get back the money invested in tomato cultivation. Initially, they hoped that they would be lucky this time too like last year when tomato prices skyrocketed to Rs 160 a kg.

The farmers had to struggle to raise tomato plants during March-April when the weather was harsh. They, however, managed to protect the plants by watering them regularly. **CONTINUED ON P5**

EXPRESS INTAKE

State govt extends HSRP deadline to Sept 15 | P2

Darshan confesses to giving ₹30L to another accused | P3

Revive stalled projects: HDK to Vaishnav | P4

16 killed in TN hoach tragedy, toll likely to go up | P5

Maharashtra Academy of Naval Education & Training Pune, INDIA
DG Shipping Awarded Grade A1 (Outstanding) in CIP

MIT-ADT UNIVERSITY
PUNE, INDIA
A Group of Institutions, World Class Education

EMBRACE MARITIME PROFESSION

100% PLACEMENT ASSISTANCE
30+ RECRUITERS ON BOARD
4050+ BENEFITTED ALUMNI
23+ GLORIOUS YEARS

ADMISSIONS OPEN FOR 2024-25

B.Tech Marine Engineering
B.Sc Nautical Science
Diploma Nautical Science*
Electro Technical Officer*

*Proposed from academic year 2024-25
Last Date of MANET Application: 30th June 2024 | Qualifying IMU-CET is Mandatory

For Enquiries: +91 9889996666 | +91 7774062351 | +91 7774062352
Website: www.manetpune.edu.in
Email: admissions.manet@mituniversity.edu.in
Gat No.140, Vishwarajbaug, Pune-Solapur Highway, Loni Kalbhori, Pune-412201

APPLY NOW

hero we care
A Hero MotoCorp CSR Initiative

YOUR SAFETY OUR PRIORITY

"Ride Right, Stay Bright: Gear up for Life!"
Join the movement for safer roads!

LAUNCH CEREMONY
Date: June 21, 2024
Time: 11:00 AM

RIDE SAFE INDIA
A Hero MotoCorp CSR Initiative

In the presence of distinguished dignitaries

Dr. G Parameshwara
Home Minister, Govt. of Karnataka

Shri. Ramalinga Reddy
Transport Minister, Govt. of Karnataka

Shri. Rizwan Arshad
MLA, Shivajinagar

Shri. B. Dayananda IPS
Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru City

Shri. AM Yogesh IAS
Joint Commissioner of Transport and Road Safety

Shri. MN Anucheth IPS
Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic), Bengaluru City

Dr. Pratima Murthy
Director, NIMHANS

Venue: The New Indian Express, Express Building,
No-1, Queen's Road, Bengaluru 560 001